

IS THE BOOK OF MORMON FROM GOD? (PART 2)

Dave Miller, Ph.D

[**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This article is the second installment in a two-part critique of *The Book of Mormon*. Part 1 appeared in the September issue. Part 2 follows below, and continues, without introductory comments, where the first article ended. It is certainly not the intention either of Apologetics Press or the author of this article to insult, demean, or misrepresent Mormons. Nevertheless, multiplied thousands of individuals, who have embraced Mormon doctrine, deserve the opportunity to assess their beliefs in light of the Bible and in anticipation of eternity. We sincerely pray that no reader will take personal affront at what follows, but will simply weigh the evidence and arrive at the truth.]

Outlandish Doctrines

Can Humans Become Gods?

One of the more eye-opening beliefs of Mormonism is the polytheistic notion that humans can become gods. Standard Mormon theology maintains that even God (the Father) and Jesus Christ were initially human. They were preceded by other humans who themselves progressed to the status of gods.

Of course, this doctrine was not presented initially by Joseph Smith, but was developed **after** the production of *The Book of Mormon*. *The Book of Mormon* actually contradicts later Mormon revelation, in that it affirmed in 1830 the biblical doctrine of the oneness of God in three persons, i.e.,

the historic Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Observe the conversation between Ammon and King Lamoni:

And then Ammon said: "Believest thou that there is a Great Spirit?" And he said, "Yea." And Ammon said: "This is God." And Ammon said unto him again: "Believest thou that this Great Spirit, who is God, created all things which are in heaven and in the earth?" And he said: "Yea, I believe that he created all things which are in the earth; but I do not know the heavens." And Ammon said unto him: "The heavens is a place where God dwells and all his holy angels.... I am called by his Holy Spirit to teach these things unto this people" (Alma 18:26-30).

Nephi declared: "And now, behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, **which is one God**, without end" (2 Nephi 31:21, emp. added). Amulek contended with the diabolical Zeezrom: "And Zeezrom said unto him: Thou sayest there is a true and living God? And Amulek said: Yea, there is a true and living God. Now Zeezrom said: **Is there more than one God?** And he answered, **No**" (Alma 11:26-29, emp. added).

The Book of Mormon also affirmed that Jesus was God in the flesh:

And now Abinadi said unto them: "I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down

among the children of men, and shall redeem his people. And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son—the Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son—**And they are one God**, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth" (Mosiah 15:1-4, emp. added).

Even the "three witnesses" to *The Book of Mormon*, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris,

CONTENTS

ARTICLES

Is The Book of Mormon From God? (Part 2)

Dave Miller. 73

DEPARTMENTS

Speaking Schedules. 77

Note from the Editor

More Episodes of Kid's TV Program 80

RESOURCES

Drawing the Wrong Conclusion. 37-R

Atheism's Real Agenda. 40-R

www.ApologeticsPress.org

affirmed monotheism and the oneness of God: “And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is **one God**” (“The Testimony...,” 1981, emp. added). Joseph Smith affirmed the same thing in the Articles of Faith: “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost” (*Pearl of...*, 1981, p. 60).

These teachings certainly are in harmony with the Bible. The Bible repeatedly and frequently affirms the doctrine of monotheism and the unity of God: Deuteronomy 4:35,39; 6:4; Isaiah 43:10-11; 44:6,8; 45:5; 46:9; Mark 12:29; Romans 3:30; 1 Corinthians 8:4,6; 1 Timothy 2:5. These and many other passages indicate “there is but one infinite Spirit Being, and that within that one Spirit essence there are three personal distinctions, each of which may be, and is, called God” (Lanier, 1974, p. 46). There is only one divine essence (*ousia*) or nature (*physis*)—a solidaric unity—one divine substance **in** (not **and**) three persons (*prosopa* or *persona*), with each “person” being the subsistence (*hupostaseis*) of the divine Essence [NOTE: For discussions of the biblical concept of Trinity and its treatment in church history, see

Archer, 1982, pp. 357-361; Bickersteth, n.d.; Boles, 1942, pp. 19ff.; Chadwick, 1967, pp. 84ff.; Schaff, 1910, 3:670ff.; Walker, 1970, pp. 106ff.; Warfield, 1939a, 5:3012-3022].

But by 1844, Joseph Smith had begun to advocate a very different understanding of deity—in direct contradiction to *The Book of Mormon*. He began to promulgate the idea that God had, in fact, previously been a man Himself Who had become exalted, and that all men were capable of the same progression (see Tanner, 1972, p. 163). This shift was expressed formally in the *Pearl of Great Price*. In the Book of Moses, God is spoken of in the **singular** throughout. For example: “I am the Beginning and the End, the Almighty God; by mine Only Begotten I created these things; yea, in the beginning I created the heaven and the earth upon which thou standest” (2:1). In stark contrast, however, in the Book of Abraham, in a section discussing the same creation event, God is spoken of as “**Gods**.” For example:

And then the Lord said: “Let us go down.” And they went down at the beginning, and they, that is **the Gods**, organized and formed the heavens and the earth. ...And **the**

Gods called the light Day, and the darkness they called Night. ...And **the Gods** watched those things which they had ordered until they obeyed. ...And **the Gods** took counsel among themselves and said: Let us go down and form man in our image, after our likeness. ...And **the Gods** planted a garden, eastward in Eden, and there they put the man, whose spirit they had put into the body which they had formed (4:1,5,18; 5:8, emp. added).

Anyone who is familiar with the King James Version cannot help but be struck with the fact that the author of the Book of Abraham had before him a copy of a KJV and merely paraphrased the text. It is equally apparent that the author “had an axe to grind” in adjusting the text to foist upon the reader the notion of multiple “gods.” In fact, in the 31 verses of chapter four, the term “Gods” is used **32 times**. It is used 16 times in chapter 5. Polytheism now so thoroughly permeates Mormonism that one Mormon apostle asserted that humans are the offspring of the union between an Eternal Father **and an Eternal Mother** (McConkie, 1979, p. 516)!

“Let Us make man”

Separate and apart from the issue of the inspiration of *The Book of Mormon*, the question must be asked: Does **the Bible** give credence to the notion of multiple gods? Certainly not! However, various verses have been marshaled in an effort to defend the Mormon viewpoint. For example, on the sixth day of Creation, God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness” (Genesis 1:26). It is alleged by Mormons that the use of the plural in this verse implies a multiplicity of “gods.” However, an examination of the context reveals that the doctrine of the Trinity is being conveyed (see Leupold, 1942, 1:86ff.).

The Holy Spirit was active at the Creation, “hovering over the face of the waters” (1:2). “Hovering” refers to attentive participation (cf. Deuteronomy 32:11). Elsewhere, the Bible makes

Reason & Revelation is published monthly by Apologetics Press, Inc. Periodicals postage paid at Montgomery, AL. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to **Reason & Revelation**, 230 Landmark Dr., Montgomery, AL 36117; **ISSN:** [1542-0922] **USPS#** 023415.

Apologetics Press is a non-profit, tax-exempt work dedicated to the defense of New Testament Christianity. Copyright © 2009. All rights reserved.

Editor:

Dave Miller, Ph.D.*
(*Communication, Southern Illinois University)

Associate Editor:

Kyle Butt, M.A.*
(*New Testament, Freed-Hardeman University)

Annual Subscription Rates:

\$10.00 Domestic
\$ 8.00 Domestic Bulk
(5+ to same address)
\$16.00 Canada & Overseas Airmail

General inquiries, changes of address, or international callers:

Phone: (334) 272-8558
Fax: (334) 270-2002

Orders:

Phone: (800) 234-8558
Fax: (800) 234-2882

On-line Web store/catalog, subscription order/renewal form, current issues, archives, and other information (all orders processed on a secure server):

URL: www.ApologeticsPress.org
URL: www.ApologeticsPress.org/espanol
E-mail: mail@ApologeticsPress.org

Discovery—Scripture & Science for Kids is a sister publication for children. For more information, please contact our offices or visit the Discovery Web site at:

URL: www.DiscoveryMagazine.com



© COPYRIGHT, APOLOGETICS PRESS, INC., 2009, ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

OCTOBER 2009 **REASON & REVELATION** 29(10):74

clear that Jesus also was present at the Creation, in active participation with Deity's creative activity (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2; 2:10). Hence, when God spoke of "Us," He was referring to Himself and the other two members of the divine Essence [NOTE: Compare "Godhead" (*theotes*) in Colossians 2:9, "divine" nature (*theios*) in Acts 17:29 and 2 Peter 1:3-4, and "divinity" (*theioteis*) in Romans 1:20. The first term (*theotes*) differs from the third term (*theioteis*) "as essence differs from quality or attribute" (Thayer, 1901, p. 288; cf. Vine, 1966, pp. 328-329; Warfield, 1939b, 2:1268-1270)]. Some (e.g., Archer, 1982, p. 74) have suggested that God was including the angels in the "us," since "sons of God" sometimes can refer to the angels (e.g., Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; cf. Psalms 29:1; 89:6), and "sons of God" can be shortened to "God" while still referring to angels (e.g., compare Psalm 97:7 with Hebrews 1:6, and Psalm 8:5 with Hebrews 2:7,9). In either case, the fact remains that the Bible presents a consistent picture that there is **only one God**, and that this divine essence includes **three**—and **only three**—persons.

"Ye shall be as gods"

Another verse that has been brought forward to substantiate Mormon polytheism is the comment made on the occasion of Adam and Eve being tempted to eat the forbidden fruit: "For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5—NKJV). The King James Version

says, "ye shall be as gods." Four points of clarification are in order on this verse. In the first place, **Satan** made this statement—not God. Satan's declarations are **never** to be trusted, since he is "a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44).

In the second place, the uncertainty conveyed by the various English translations in their differing treatment of the verse (i.e., whether "God" or "gods") is the result of the underlying Hebrew term *elohim*. This word is not to be confused with Yahweh, the formal name for God throughout the Old Testament. *Elohim* is a generic term used some 2,570 times in Scripture, and generally refers to the one true God, but also is used to refer to pagan gods, and even can refer to human judges or rulers (e.g., Exodus 4:16; 7:1; 21:6; 22:9,28) and, as noted previously, to angels (Harris, et al., 1980, 1:44-45; Miller, 2008, pp. 114-115). Though the word is plural in form, it is used in both the plural and singular sense [cf. "face" (*panim*—Genesis 50:1; Exodus 34:35) and "image" (*teraphim*—1 Samuel 19:13)]. English shares a similar phenomenon with its plural nouns like "deer," "seed," "sheep," and "moose." The same form is used, whether referring to one or many. Hebrew, like most other languages, matched the number (whether singular or plural) of verbs and adjectives with the noun. In the case of *elohim*, with only rare exception, the verbs and adjectives used with it are either singular or plural in conformity with the intended meaning (Ringgren, 1974, p. 272). Fretheim noted that its use in the Old Testament for Israel's

God is "always with singular verbs" (1997, 1:405; cf. Archer, 1982, p. 74).

Some Hebrew scholars maintain that the plural form used to designate the one true God is the *pluralis majestatis* or *excellantiae* (the plural of majesty), or the plural of intensification, absolutization, or exclusivity (e.g., Fretheim, 1:405; Gesenius, 1847, p. 49; Harris, et al., p. 44; Mack, 1939, 2:1265; Reeve, 1939, 2:1270), although others question this usage (e.g., Grudem, 1994, p. 227; Jenni and Westermann, 1997, p. 116). In the case at hand, Satan was tempting Eve with the prospect of being like God—Whom she knew, and from Whom she (or at least her husband) had received previous communication (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:3). She knew nothing of other "gods"—pagan or otherwise. Since the term *elohim* occurs 58 times in the first three chapters of Genesis and is consistently rendered "God," and since **Satan himself used the term** earlier in the same verse, as well as four verses earlier (vs. 1), to refer to the one God, no contextual, grammatical, or lexical reason exists for rendering it "gods" in verse five. In fact, most of the major English translations properly render it "God" (e.g., NKJV, ASV, NASB, NIV, RSV). [NOTE: See also the discussion in Clarke, n.d., 1:50, who noted that the ancient Syriac version rendered the term correctly].

Third, *elohim* in this verse has an attached prefix (*Biblia Hebraica*, 1967/77, p. 4)—what Hebrew scholars call an "inseparable preposition" (Weingreen, 1959, p. 26). In this case, the prepositional prefix is the 11th letter of the



Mormon Temple, Salt Lake City, 1910
Credit: Library of Congress



Hebrew alphabet, the *kaph*, and means “like” or “as.” Satan was not saying that Eve would become God or a god; He was saying she would become **like** God.

This realization brings us to a fourth point: the context stipulates **in what way** Eve would become like God. In the very verse under consideration, an explanatory phrase clarifies what Satan meant: “You will be like God, **knowing good and evil**” (emp. added). This meaning is evident from subsequent references in the same chapter. When they disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit, “the eyes of both of them were **opened**, and they **knew**...” (vs. 7, emp. added). God commented: “Behold, the man has become **like** one of Us, **to know good and evil**” (vs. 22, emp. added). In other words, Adam and Eve became **like God** in the sense that they now were privy to a greater breadth of awareness, understanding, and insight:

They now had a sufficient discovery of their sin and folly in disobeying the command of God; they could discern between good and evil; and what was the consequence?

Confusion and shame were engendered, because innocence was lost and guilt contracted (Clarke, p. 51).

As Keil and Delitzsch summarized: “By eating the fruit, man did obtain the knowledge of good and evil, and **in this respect** became like God” (1976, 1:95, emp. added).

“God of gods”

A third attempt to substantiate the Mormon doctrine of plural gods is the use of various verses from the Bible that speak of God being a “God of gods.” For example, on the occasion of the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, the “Song of Moses” declared: “Who is like You, O Lord, **among the gods?**” (Exodus 15:11, emp. added). Forty years later, in his stirring challenge to the Israelites to be firm in their future commitment to God, Moses reminded them: “For the Lord your God is **God of gods** and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome” (Deuteronomy 10:17, emp. added). During the days of Joshua, some of the Israelites exclaimed:

“The Lord **God of gods**, the Lord **God of gods**, He knows” (Joshua 22:22, emp. added). These verses, and many more in the Bible, speak of “gods” in such a way that a cursory reading might leave one with the impression that the Bible teaches that “gods” actually existed. However, one cannot **really study** the Bible and come away with that conclusion. The Bible presents a thoroughgoing monotheistic view of reality. It repeatedly conveys the fact that “gods” are merely the figment of human imagination, invented by humans to provide themselves with exemption from following the one true God by living up to the higher standard of deity. Humans throughout history have conjured up their own imaginary gods to justify freedom from restriction and to excuse relaxed moral behavior.

Consequently, all verses in the Bible that use the term “gods” to refer to deity (with the exception of the one God) are referring to nonexistent, imaginary deities that humans have invented. When God gave the Ten Commandments to the Israelites, the very first one said: “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:3). Liberal higher critics of the Bible (like Wellhausen) have alleged that this dictum advocated only monolatry (exclusive worship of Yahweh) rather than actually denying the **existence** of other gods. However, distinguished professor of Old Testament languages, Gleason Archer, maintains that “this construction of the words is quite unwarranted” (1974, p. 235). Many additional passages clarify the point. For example, the psalmist declared: “For the Lord is great and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above **all gods**” (Psalm 96:4, emp. added). One might get the impression from this verse by itself that the psalmist thought that “gods” actually existed. However, the next verse sets the record straight: “For all the gods of the peoples **are idols**, but the Lord made the heavens” (vs. 5, emp. added). The Hebrew word for “idols” (*elilim*) means “of nothing, of nought, empty,

vain” (Gesenius, p. 51). Notice carefully the contrast the psalmist was making. The people **made** their gods; but the one true God made **the heavens** (i.e., the Universe). The genuineness, reality, and greatness of God are placed in contrast to the people’s fake, nonexistent gods **who could not make anything**. Archer concluded: “This passage alone...demonstrates conclusively that the mention of ‘gods’ in the plural implied no admission of the actual existence of heathen gods in the first commandment” (1974, p. 236). As God Himself announced: “They have provoked Me to jealousy by **what is not God**” (Deuteronomy 32:21, emp. added).

The denunciation of the Israelites for conjuring up false gods—pretending that such actually existed, rather than devoting themselves exclusively to the one and only God—reached its zenith in the eloquent preaching pronouncements of the Old Testament prophets. Elijah treated the notion of the existence of gods in addition to the one God with sarcasm and forthright ridicule (1 Kings 18:27-29). The idea of multiple gods would have been laughable, if it were not so spiritually serious (cf. Psalm 115:2-8). The people on that occasion finally got the point, for they shouted: “The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!” (vs. 39).

Likewise, the reality of monotheism was pure, well-defined, and single-minded for Jeremiah. He frequently chastised the people by accusing them of following gods that were, in fact, “not gods” (2:11; 5:7; 16:20). Isaiah was equally adamant and explicit:

You are My witnesses, says the Lord, and My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. **Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me.** I, even I, am the Lord, and **besides Me there is no savior.** I have declared and saved, I have proclaimed, and there was no foreign god among you; therefore you are My witnesses, says the Lord, that I am God. Indeed, before the day was, I am He; and there is no one who can deliver out of My hand; I



Drawing the Wrong Conclusion: Squid Ink Cannot Last 150 Million Years

Kyle Butt, M.A.

The sketch of a fossilized squid named *Belemnnotheutis antiquus* is unremarkable in many ways. The “uninformed” observer would think that it is just another, everyday line drawing. What makes this sketch so noteworthy is the fact that the ink used to draw the creature was extracted from the creature’s own fossil—a fossil that, according to the evolutionary timeline, is supposed to date back 150 million years. Yes, the useable ink is supposedly 150 million years old.

Of course, when an evolutionist discovers that a substance as prone to decay as squid ink is still usable, it calls for an explanation. Phil Wilby, the researcher who led the excavation, commented: “Normally you would find only the hard parts like the shell and bones fossilized but there are a handful of locations around the world where soft preservation of the muscle, guts and gills has taken place” (as quoted in Wardrop, 2009). Wilby noted that these soft-tissues “can be dissected as if they are living animals, you can see muscle fibres and cells.” In what sounds like an astounding understatement, he stated: “It is difficult to imagine how you can have something as soft and sloppy as an ink sac fossilized in three dimension, still black, and inside a rock that is 150 millions years old” (as quoted in Wardrop). The word “difficult” does not seem to harness the concept of the leap that Wilby is asking observers to make. Words and phrases like “miraculous,” “impossible,” “beyond comprehension,” “outside the bounds of all known scientific laws” would seem to fit better in this discussion. Supposedly, a squid’s soft ink sac has lasted for 150 million years in such a well-preserved state that you can mix the ink with a little ammonia solution and use it to draw a picture. Such a conclusion is simply not feasible, scientific, or rational.

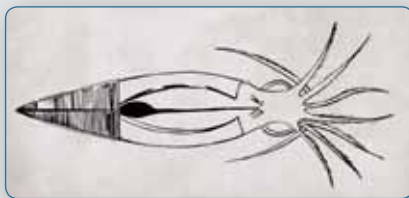
When this discovery was made, the millions-of-years dating so often relied upon by evolutionists should have immediately been called into question. But it was not. Instead, the evolutionary community said this miraculous preservation is an example of the “Medusa Effect.” How the Medusa Effect could preserve such tissue is not explained. Nor is there any discussion of all the physical and chemical barriers that would be insurmountable in preserving useable

ink or soft tissue for 150 million years. Instead, the discovery is simply presented with a wave of the evolutionary hand as if to say, “Don’t think about this too much, just trust us when we say ink could last 150 million years.”

Surely, it is high time that the thinking population of the world quits “trusting” the evolutionary scenario when such direct evidence of its inadequacy is written in “black and white.” This new discovery stretches the “soft tissue” preservation myth back even farther than many of the dinosaur fossils that contain soft tissue (see Lyons, 2007; Butt, 2009). How refreshing would it be to see the scientific community truly follow the evidence where it leads by demanding that the alleged millions of years of Earth history be re-evaluated? It is sad to realize that a general population of honest scientists following the evidence where it leads is little more than a pipe dream, mired by the reality of virtually an entire community that has been deluded by the specter of evolution. What would it take to blot out the false notion that the Earth is millions of years old? How much more ink will have to be spilled on the subject before the billions of years of evolution history are jettisoned for their lack of validity? Too much. Far too much.

REFERENCES

- Butt, Kyle (2009), “Recent Hype Over Dinosaur Soft Tissue,” [On-line], URL: <http://www.apologeticspress.org/articles/240209>.
- Lyons, Eric (2007), “More Soft Dinosaur Tissue,” [On-line], URL: <http://www.apologeticspress.org/articles/3518>.
- Wardrop, Murray (2009), “Scientists Draw Squid Using Its 150 Million-Year-Old Fossilised Ink,” *Telegraph*, [On-line], URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/science-news/5794280/Scientists-draw-squid-using-its-150-million-year-old-fossilised-ink.html>.



Belemnnotheutis antiquus

RESOURCES

Atheism's Real Agenda: Censure and Termination

In 2004, Sam Harris published his *New York Times* bestseller *The End of Faith*. In that book, Harris supports atheism as the only rational view of the world. He condemns all forms of religious faith, including and especially Christianity, as detrimental and potentially dangerous. He goes so far as to suggest that some beliefs are so serious that simply holding such should be a punishable offense. He stated:

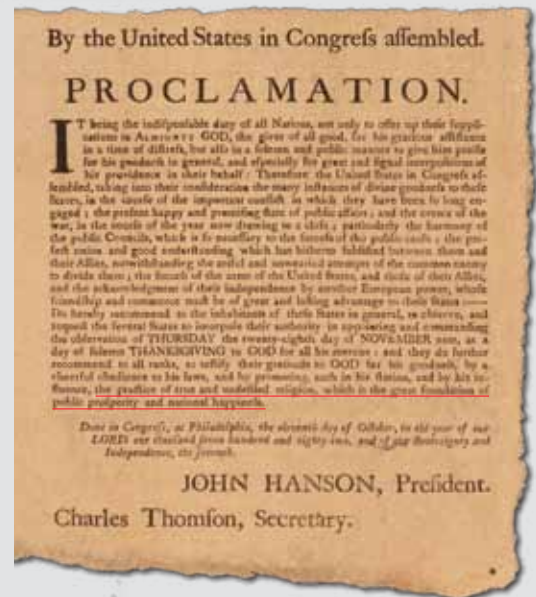
The link between belief and behavior raises the stakes considerably. Some propositions are so dangerous that it may even be ethical to kill people for **believing** them. This may seem an extraordinary claim, but it merely enunciates an ordinary fact about the world in which we live. **Certain beliefs** place their adherents beyond the reach of every peaceful means of persuasion, while inspiring them to commit acts of extraordinary violence against others (2004, pp. 52-53, emp. added).

In the immediate context, Harris is referring to militant Muslims whose religious beliefs lead them to kill infidels. Later in the book, however, we see another belief that Harris considers to be a punishable offense. On page 156, Harris discussed his view of political leaders who espouse Christian sentiments. He opined:

Men eager to do the Lord's work have been elected to other branches of federal government as well. The House majority lead, Tom Delay, is given to profundities like "Only Christianity offers a way to live in response to the realities that we find in this world. Only Christianity." He claims to have gone into politics "to promote a Biblical worldview." Apparently feeling that it is impossible to say anything stupid while in the service of this worldview, he attributed the shootings at Columbine High School in Colorado to the fact that our schools teach the theory of evolution (2004, p. 156).

What, then, does Harris believe should happen to a person who openly claims that Christianity is the global solution to the world's ills? Harris quipped: "We might wonder how it is that pronouncements this floridly irrational do not lead to **immediate censure and removal from office**" (p. 156, emp. added).

In this brief article we will not go into the facts that the Columbine shootings were inspired by evolution, that atheism is completely irrational, and that Christianity can be shown to be the only solution to the realities of this world. The sole purpose of this article is to show that atheism's ultimate agenda is to censure those



In direct contradiction to Harris, the Founders of America said Christianity is the "foundation" of "national happiness."

who espouse Christianity and to persecute the belief to extinction. The atheistic community is not a "live and let live" market place of ideas. Harris vividly manifests the fact that atheism views Christianity as a dangerous belief that should be quelled at all cost, including punishing those who espouse it. The "freethought" community's idea of "freethought" is that all people are "free" to think how they like, **as long as** that thought process is atheistic at its core and excludes Christianity.

With atheism being one of the fastest growing beliefs in our country, it is time that Christians recognize the agenda of those leading the atheistic charge. If atheism has its way, according to bestselling atheist Sam Harris, it should be a punishable offense to publicly proclaim that Christianity is the only solution to humanity's problems. Rue the day that atheism and its leaders become prominent enough to enforce such an agenda. For Christians, "now it is high time to awake out of sleep" (Romans 13:11) and stand up for the Truth while we have opportunity.

Kyle Butt, M.A.

REFERENCE

Harris, Sam (2004), *The End of Faith* (New York: W.W. Norton).

work, and who will reverse it? (43:10-13, emp. added; cf. 37: 19; 40:18-20; 41; 44:8-24).

Over and over, Isaiah recorded the exclusivity of the one true God: “I am the Lord, and there is no other; **there is no God besides Me**” (45:5, emp. added); “There is **no other God**” (45:14, emp. added); “I am the Lord, and **there is no other**” (45:18, emp. added).

The New Testament continues the same recognition of the nonexistence of deities beyond the one God Who exists in three persons. Paul reminded the Galatian Christians of their pre-Christian foolish belief in other deities: “But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature **are not gods**” (4:8, emp. added). By definition, the “gods” that people claim actually exist are not gods. In his lengthy discussion of whether Christians were permitted to eat foods that had been sacrificed to pagan deities, Paul clarified succinctly the Bible position on the existence of so-called gods:

Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is **nothing** in the world, and that **there is no other God but one**. For even if there are **so-called gods**, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us there is only one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through

whom are all things, and through whom we live (1 Corinthians 8:4-6, emp. added).

In this passage, Paul declared very forthrightly that idols, and the gods they represent, are, in fact, **nonentities**. The RSV renders the meaning even more clearly: “We know that **an idol has no real existence**, and that **there is no God but one**” (emp. added).

Of course, Paul recognized and acknowledged that humans have worshipped imaginary, nonexistent, “so-called” gods in heaven (like Greek mythology advocated) and on Earth (in the form of idols). He used the figure of speech known as “metonymy of the adjunct,” where “things are spoken of according to appearance, opinions formed respecting them, or the claims made for them” (Bullinger, 1898, p. 597; Dungan, 1888, p. 295; cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4). He spoke of “gods” as if they existed, simply because many people of his day had that opinion. But Paul knew “there is no God but one.” As Allen observed: “The gods (i.e., the so-called divine beings contemplated by the pagans) represented by the images **did not exist**. ...[T]hey were nothing as far as representing the deities envisioned by the heathen” (1975, p. 98, emp. added; cf. Kelcy, 1967, p. 38; Thomas, 1984, p. 30).

Paul continued his discussion of idols two chapters later, and again affirmed the nonexistence of any deities besides God: “What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything?” (1 Corinthians 10:19). For Paul, it was technically permissible for a Christian to eat food that had previously been used in a pagan ceremony as an offering to a “god.” Why? Because **such “gods” did not, and do not, actually exist**—except in the mind of the worshipper (cf. 8:7-8)! Thus, the food used in such ceremonies was unaffected. However, the person who **really thinks** there are “gods,” and who then worships these imaginary “gods,” is, in actuality, worshipping **demons** (10:20). Paul said there are only two possibilities: “But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons” (10:20-21). Paul envisioned no class of beings known as “gods.” There is only the one true God, and then there are the demons and forces of Satan (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:15-16). This bifurcation of the spiritual realm (i.e., God versus Satan and his forces) is the consistent portrait presented throughout the Bible. The Bible simply admits no knowledge or possibility of “gods.”

“You are gods”

A final passage that is alleged to support the notion of “gods” is the statement made by Jesus when the Jews wanted to stone Him because He claimed divinity for Himself:

The Jews answered Him, saying, “For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.” Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, “You are gods”?’ If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came...do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, “You are blaspheming,” because I said, “I am the Son of God”? (John 10:33-36).

SPEAKING SCHEDULES

Kyle Butt

October 4-8	Summertown, TN	(931) 964-4730
November 6-8	West Palm Beach, FL	(561) 848-1111
November 29	Chapel Hill, TN	(931) 364-7599

Eric Lyons

October 4-7	Millbrook, AL	(334) 285-6327
October 16-18	Katy, TX	(281) 391-7606
November 7	West Palm Beach, FL	(561) 848-1111

Dave Miller

October 3-4	Hamilton, AL	(205) 921-9417
October 9-11	Bolivar, MO	(417) 326-4727
October 16-18	Elizabethtown, KY	(270) 765-6446
October 22	Memphis, TN	(901) 743-0464

Mormons allege that Jesus here endorsed the notion that men can become “gods.” But, of course, Jesus did no such thing. On this occasion, He appealed to an Old Testament context to deflect the barb of His critics. Psalm 82 is a passage that issued a scathing indictment of the unjust judges who had been assigned the responsibility of executing God’s justice among the people (cf. Deuteronomy 1:16; 19:17-18; Psalm 58). Such a magistrate was “God’s minister” (Romans 13:4) who acted **in the place of God**, wielding **His authority**, and who was responsible for mediating **God’s help and justice** (cf. Exodus 7:1). In **this** sense, they were “gods” (*elohim*)—**acting as God** to men (Barclay, 1956, 2:89). Hebrew parallelism clarifies this sense: “I said, ‘You are gods, and all of you are **children of the Most High**’” (Psalm 82:6, emp. added). They did not share **divinity** with God—but merely delegated **jurisdiction**. They still were mere humans—although invested with divine authority, and permitted to act in God’s behalf.

This point is apparent throughout the Torah, where the term translated “judges” or “ruler” is occasionally *elohim* (e.g., Exodus 21:6; 22:9,28). Take Moses as an example. Moses was not a “god.” Yet God told Moses that when he went to Egypt to orchestrate the release of the Israelites, he would be “God” to his brother Aaron and to Pharaoh (Exodus 4:16; 7:1). He meant that Moses would supply both his brother and Pharaoh with the words that came from God. Though admittedly a rather rare use of *elohim*, nevertheless “it shows that the word translated ‘god’ in that place **might** be applied to man” (Barnes, 1949, p. 294, emp. in orig.). Clarke summarized this point: “Ye are my **representatives**, and are clothed with my power and authority to dispense judgment and justice, therefore **all of them** are said to be **children of the Most High**” (3:479, emp. in orig.). But because they had shirked their awesome responsibility to represent God’s will fairly and accurately, and because they had betrayed

the sacred trust bestowed upon them by God Himself, He decreed death upon them (vs. 7). Obviously, they were not “gods,” since God could and would **execute** them!

Jesus marshaled this Old Testament psalm to thwart His opponents’ attack, while simultaneously reaffirming His deity (which is the central feature of the book of John—20:30-31). He made shrewd use of syllogistic argumentation by reasoning *a minori ad majus* (see Lenski, 1943, pp. 765-770; cf. Fishbane, 1985, p. 420). “Jesus is here arguing like a rabbi from a lesser position to a greater position, a ‘how much more’ argument very popular among the rabbis” (Pack, 1975, 1:178). In fact, “it is an argument which to a Jewish Rabbi would have been entirely convincing. It was just the kind of argument, an argument founded on a word of scripture, which the Rabbis loved to use and found most unanswerable” (Barclay, 1956, p. 90).

Jesus identified the unjust judges of Israel as persons “to whom the word of God came” (John 10:35). That is, they had been “appointed judges by Divine commission” (Butler, 1961, p. 127)—by “the **command of God**; his commission to them to do justice” (Barnes, 1949, p. 294, emp. in orig.; cf. Jeremiah 1:2; Ezekiel 1:3; Luke 3:2). McGarvey summarized the ensuing argument of Jesus: “If it was not blasphemy to call those gods who so remotely represented the Deity, how much less did Christ blaspheme in taking unto himself a title to which he had a better right than they, even in the subordinate sense of being a mere messenger” (n.d., p. 487). Charles Erdman observed:

By his defense Jesus does not renounce his claim to deity; but he argues that if the judges, who represented Jehovah in their appointed office, could be called “gods,” in the Hebrew scriptures, it could not be blasphemy for him, who was the final and complete revelation of God, to call himself “the Son of God” (1922, pp. 95-96; cf. Morris, 1971, pp. 527-528).

This verse teaches **the exact opposite** of what Mormons would like for it to teach! It brings into stark contrast the deity—the **Godhood**—of Christ (and His Father Who “sanctified and sent” Him—vs. 36) with the **absence of deity** for all others! There are no other “gods” in the sense of **deity**, i.e., eternity and infinitude in all attributes. Jesus verified this very conclusion by directing the attention of His accusers to the “works” that He performed (vs. 37-38). These “works” (i.e., miraculous signs) proved the divine identity of Jesus to the exclusion of all other alleged deities. Archer concluded: “By no means, then, does our Lord imply here that we are sons of God just as He is—except for a lower level of holiness and virtue. No misunderstanding could be more wrongheaded than that” (1982, p. 374). Indeed, the Mormon notion of a plurality of gods is “wrongheaded,” as is the accompanying claim that humans can become gods.

It is unthinkable that the consistent prohibition of polytheism and idolatry throughout the Bible would or could give way to the completely contrary notion that, as a matter of fact, many gods **do** exist, and that these gods are merely exalted humans who now rule over their own worlds even as God and Christ rule over theirs. It is likewise outlandish—and contradictory—that humans would be **required** to worship God and Christ—while being **banned** from worshipping these other gods. The fact of the matter is that “historic Hebrew is unquestionably and uniformly monotheistic” (Mack, 1939, 2:1265). The same may be said of historic Christianity. To think otherwise is **pure pagan hocus-pocus**—“a mere creation of **the imagination**, a mere matter of **superstition**” (Erdman, 1928, p. 78, emp. added).

CONCLUSION

An honest and humble appraisal of these and many other discrepancies and doctrines should create great concern in the heart of one who believes Mormon



documents to be inspired. Many criticisms have been leveled against the Bible over the centuries, yet have been answered decisively (e.g., Lyons, 2003; Lyons, 2005; Archer, 1982; Haley, 1977). If *The Book of Mormon* were from God, it, too, could be defended and its divine authenticity substantiated. However, the lack of adequate explanations to clarify such problems compels the honest individual to conclude that *The Book of Mormon* and other Mormon scriptures do not derive their origin from the God of the Bible.

REFERENCES

- Allen, Jimmy (1975), *Survey of 1 Corinthians* (Searcy, AR: Privately published by author).
- Archer, Gleason L. (1974), *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago, IL: Moody), revised edition.
- Archer, Gleason L. (1982), *An Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan).
- Barclay, William (1956), *The Gospel of John* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press), second edition.
- Barnes, Albert (1949 reprint), *Notes on the New Testament: Luke and John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1967/77), (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung).
- Bickersteth, Edward (no date), *The Trinity* (MacDill AFB, FL: MacDonald Publishing).
- Boles, H. Leo (1942), *The Holy Spirit: His Personality, Nature, Works* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate, 1971 reprint).
- The Book of Mormon* (1981 reprint), (Salt Lake City, UT: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints).
- Bullinger, E.W. (1898), *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1968 reprint).
- Butler, Paul (1961), *The Gospel of John* (Joplin, MO: College Press).
- Chadwick, Henry (1967), *The Early Church* (New York: Penguin Books).
- Clarke, Adam (no date), *Clarke's Commentary: Genesis-Deuteronomy* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury).
- Dungan, D.R. (1888), *Hermeneutics* (Delight, AR: Gospel Light).
- Erdman, Charles (1922), *The Gospel of John* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster).
- Erdman, Charles (1928), *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster).
- Fishbane, Michael (1985), *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- Fretheim, Terence (1997), "elohim," in *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan).
- Gesenius, William (1847), *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), 1979 reprint.
- Grudem, Wayne (1994), *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan).
- Harris, R. Laird, Gleason Archer, Jr. and Bruce Waltke, eds. (1980), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody).
- Haley, John (1977 reprint), *Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Jenni, Ernst and Claus Westermann (1997), *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson).
- Keil, C.F. and F. Delitzsch (1976 reprint), *Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans).
- Kelcy, Raymond C. (1967), *First Corinthians* (Austin, TX: Sweet).
- Lanier, Roy H., Sr. (1974), *The Timeless Trinity for the Ceaseless Centuries* (Denver, CO: Roy H. Lanier, Sr.).
- Lenski, R.C.H. (1943), *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg).
- Leupold, Herbert C. (1942), *Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1950 reprint).
- Lyons, Eric (2003), *The Anvil Rings: Volume 1* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press).
- Lyons, Eric (2005), *The Anvil Rings: Volume 2* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press).
- Mack, Edward (1939), "Names of God," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974 reprint).
- McConkie, Bruce (1979), *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft).
- McGarvey, J.W. (n.d.), *The Fourfold Gospel* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard).
- Miller, Dave (2008), "Promised Messiah" in *Behold the Lamb*, ed. David Lipe (Henderson, TN: Freed-Hardeman University).
- Morris, Leon (1971), *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans).
- Pack, Frank (1975), *The Gospel According to John* (Austin, TX: Sweet).
- Pearl of Great Price* (1981 reprint), (Salt Lake City, UT: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints).
- Reeve, J.J. (1939), "Gods," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 1974 reprint.
- Ringgren, Helmer (1974), "elohim," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans).
- Schaff, Philip (1910), *History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979 reprint).
- Tanner, Jerald and Sandra (1972), *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?* (Salt Lake City, UT: Modern Microfilm).
- "The Testimony of Three Witnesses" (1981 reprint), Introduction to the *Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints).
- Thayer, Joseph H. (1901), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1977 reprint).
- Thomas, J.D. (1984), *The Message of the New Testament: First Corinthians* (Abilene, TX: Biblical Research Press).
- Vine, W.E. (1966 reprint), *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell).
- Walker, Williston (1970), *A History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons).
- Warfield, Benjamin (1939a), "Trinity," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974 reprint).
- Warfield, Benjamin (1939b), "Godhead," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974 reprint).
- Weingreen, J. (1959), *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), second edition.

NOTE: For an extended version of this article, which includes a discussion of the Mormon doctrine of baptism for the dead, visit <http://www.apologeticspress.org/articles/240218>.





NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

APOLOGETICS
PRESS, INC.

MORE EPISODES OF KID'S TV PROGRAM RELEASED

Producing a children's television program is not an easy task. The logistics are enormous and complex. Nevertheless, the Lord has blessed Apologetics Press with the wherewithal to produce such a program, and we have taken the task seriously, in hopes that the Lord would use the program to solidify young hearts. Here are some indications of the results from parents:

Christa writes from Nashville:

We just wanted to tell you how much Digger Doug has influenced our daughter.... She is five and loves Digger Doug and Iguana Don. In fact, she watches it every night with her daddy before we go to bed and then they talk about it. Thank you so much for providing our children with clean, informative, and scriptural television that we can let them watch without fear.

Kristen writes from San Diego, California:

My son absolutely loves the Digger Doug's Underground DVDs!... These are exactly what I've been seeking for my science-loving son. We've been through National Geographic and DK DVDs and books but they obviously focus on old-Earth and evolution.

Leah writes from Florence, Alabama:

[P]lease, please, please make more Digger Doug shows; they are a hit with the kids!

We at A.P. are listening to what these parents are saying, and we are working steadily to accommodate their need. *Digger Doug's Underground* is devoted to teaching children basic Bible principles concerning God as Creator and the Earth as His creation. Based on the characters from our popular *Discovery* magazine for children, the program consists of costumed animal characters, colorful sets,

educational dialogue, and participatory singing. Young viewers are literally captivated by the substance and variety that is provided. They find themselves viewing the programs over and over again.

In addition to airing regularly on the Gospel Broadcasting Network (www.gbntv.org), we are slowly, but surely, transferring episodes to DVD. Four volumes are already on the market (8 episodes). We are happy to announce the release of the fifth volume. Like its predecessors, volume 5 is packaged in an attractive and colorful DVD box and contains two episodes—Episode 9 titled “Similar Things” and Episode 10 titled “Evolutionary Hoaxes.”

If you are a parent or grandparent, or if you are concerned about the spiritual development of children in your acquaintance, please consider providing these valuable resources for those children. You may well plant seeds now that will bear fruit years from now—even to the point of rescuing a soul from the destructive effects of evolution and the secularism that have literally inundated our culture. I urge you to secure copies of all five DVD volumes (ten 30-minute episodes in all) and help insulate children from the powers of darkness.

Dave Miller



See the Center Spread
for More Details

